

EFFECTS OF ENDORSER ATTRACTIVENESS ON AUDIENCE PERCEPTION  
OF ENDORSER CREDIBILITY IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY  
MESSAGES

A Thesis

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by

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## ABSTRACT

Much research has been conducted regarding the physical attractiveness of spokespersons as related to perceptions of credibility of the spokesperson and the sponsoring organization. Advertising and marketing research has shown that physical attractiveness can lead to greater perceptions of credibility of both the spokesperson and sponsoring organization, but these findings often depend on the type of products being marketed, e.g. everyday products versus beauty-enhancing products. This thesis is an experiment that tests whether a highly attractive or moderate/unattractive endorser leads to greater perceived credibility of corporations in the context of selling ideas, i.e. the concept and credibility of corporate social responsibility messages, rather than the selling of commercial products. The study also tested for interactions between attractiveness of endorser, company type, and personal involvement.

One hundred and thirty-seven subjects participated in a 2X2X2 experimental design study (in survey form) in which I manipulated the independent variables of endorser attractiveness and company type and measured cognitive involvement (control variable) and examined their effects on perceived credibility of the endorser and organization. Furthermore, this thesis examines the relationship between endorser credibility and organizational credibility.

Results from the data analysis suggest, first, that there is a positive correlation between endorser credibility and corporate credibility. Second, attractiveness does not behave the same in public relations as in product marketing and advertising. Specifically, this study's findings suggest that attractiveness was negatively correlated with perceptions of overall endorser credibility as well as endorser expertise and trustworthiness. Third, there is an interaction between company type and endorser attractiveness for perceptions of endorser expertise. Finally, the results show that high

cognitive involvement does not lead to smaller differences of means in endorser credibility between attractive and unattractive endorsers as was hypothesized in this study.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born and raised in California's state capitol, Sacramento, on December 23, 1977 to a psychologist father and political consultant mother, Briana K. Anderson grew up in a politically active and socially conscious environment.

After receiving a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science (*magna cum laude*) in June of 2000 from California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, she worked for two years as a management analyst for KPMG Consulting in its Public Services practice. During her tenure at KPMG Consulting, she served a number of public clients and travel and worked in such interesting places as Guam, Alaska, and (her favorite city in the US) San Francisco. Her projects ranged from learning the ropes on a business process reengineering projects to managing a public outreach campaign for a federal loan program. She also ran a marathon and raised money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, and enjoyed the sights and scenes of Northern California.

In working with clients providing business advice, she was most interested in helping clients resolved communication-based problems, such as communication with internal or external stakeholders. She realized that this was her passion, and set off to Cornell to further her knowledge in this area and sharpen her analytical skills. With an original interest in social marketing (a mix of her public policy background and interest in marketing communications), she became more interested in image-building and corporate social responsibility as her time at Cornell continued. Whether that means she will work for a non-profit trying to increase its funding, a corporation trying to rebuild its image, or an agency helping clients communicate better with stakeholders, she is not quite sure yet, but looks forward to the next phase of her

career development and moving back to California and putting her newfound knowledge and skills to work!

*This thesis is dedicated to my family and friends who have been an incredible support and also to the survivors and victims of cancer who have touched my life and the lives of my family and friends.*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

ELM – Elaboration Likelihood Model

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Physical attractiveness has been a popular topic of research for social psychology and marketing/advertising academicians for years, supporting the ‘what is beautiful is good’ stereotype (Dion et al., 1972). Research in interpersonal relations has demonstrated that attractive people are perceived more favorably than unattractive people. In addition, research has been conducted regarding the use of attractive vs. moderate or unattractive endorsers in commercial advertising and marketing. This applied advertising and marketing research has demonstrated that physical attractiveness can lead to greater perceptions of credibility of both the spokesperson and sponsoring organization, but these findings often depend on the type of product being marketed, e.g. every day products versus beauty enhancing products (see: Lynch & Schuler, 1994; Kamins, 1990).

Furthermore, researchers have also studied endorser and organizational credibility. Endorser credibility has been conceptualized by source expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990). Organizational (or corporate credibility) has been conceptualized in terms of perceived expertise of and trust in the organization (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001). This research has focused on endorser and corporate credibility as separate phenomena. The question that is left unanswered is the effect of endorser credibility on organizational credibility. Typically in marketing/advertising research, endorser credibility and organizational credibility are studied separately in terms of their relative effects on advertising outcome variables

such as attitude toward ad, attitude toward brand, and purchase intention. This thesis examines endorser and organizational credibility in the context of public relations (image/reputation building) where the outcome variable of interest is perceived credibility of the organization as well as tests the effect of endorser credibility on corporate credibility.

One way that organizations (especially corporations) enhance their corporate credibility (or reputation) is by engaging in socially responsible activities. An important component is communicating about these activities to internal and external stakeholders through print and electronic (website) advertisements.

This thesis seeks to determine if (or to what extent) physical attractiveness of endorser affects perceptions of credibility of the endorser and sponsoring company of a corporate social responsibility advertisement. Additionally, this thesis seeks to determine whether there is an interaction between attractiveness of endorser, company type and personal involvement. The results of the study can provide both theoretical and practical understanding of physical attractiveness and how it relates to the selling of an idea or establishing a relationship between an organization and its publics, such as in public relations.



## CHAPTER TWO

### BACKGROUND & PURPOSE OF STUDY

#### Credibility

Current literature on public relations indicates that the communication between an organization and its publics ought to be conceptualized as a relationship. This conceptualization uses aspects from interpersonal relationship research and applies them to the relationship an organization has with its stakeholders (Ledingham & Brunig, 2000). One such aspect of relationships is the concept of credibility, defined in Merriam-Webster dictionary as ‘the quality or power of inspiring belief’ (<http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary>). Credibility is essential if an organization seeks to build a strong relationship with its stakeholders (e.g. targeted consumers, shareholders, and employees), with the end result of increased market share, higher stock prices, or attracting quality employees. Moreover, a credible source can influence beliefs, opinions, attitudes based on a process termed *internalization* (Kelman, 1961), which states that a person accepts a source influence in terms of their personal attitude and value structure.

Research on source credibility has produced different definitions and conceptions, but this study defines credibility in terms of the amount of perceived *expertise* and *trustworthiness* (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Dholakia and Sternthal, 1977) of the source. Expertise is defined as the extent to which a source is perceived to make valid claims, whereas trustworthiness is defined as the degree of perceived honesty, integrity, and believability of a source (Erdogan, 1999). Advertising, public relations, and marketing researchers have used this conception of source credibility in studies related to both endorser credibility (Ohanian, 1990; Ohanian, 1991), and organizational credibility (Goldsmith et al., 2000).

In fact, based on this conception of source credibility attributes, Newell and Goldsmith (2001) developed a corporate (or organizational) credibility measure. The scale was tested for reliability ( $\alpha$ ) and construct validity (based on evaluations of existing organizations, e.g. IBM and Texxon and correlations with typical advertising variables<sup>1</sup>. Their scale includes the following four items for perceived expertise and four items related to perceived trustworthiness.

The XYZ Corporation has a great amount of experience,

The XYZ Corporation is skilled in what they do,

The XYZ Corporation has great expertise,

The XYZ Corporation does *not* have much experience.

I trust the XYZ Corporation.

The XYZ Corporation makes truthful claims.

The XYZ Corporation is honest.

I do not believe what the XYZ Corporation tells me.

Grunig and Hon (1999), however, developed their measure of organizational credibility based on the aforementioned concept of the importance of establishing a relationship between an organization and its publics<sup>2</sup>. The Grunig/Hon (1999) scale was developed with six relationship elements including *control mutuality* (degree to which parties agree on who has the right to influence one another), *trust* (one party's willingness to open oneself to the other party), *satisfaction* (extent to which each party feels favorably toward the other because positive experiences are reinforced), *commitment* (extent to which each party believes and feels the relationship is worth spending energy on to maintain it), *exchange relationship* (both parties give because

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<sup>1</sup> Perceived ad credibility, attitude toward ad, attitude toward corporation's brand, and purchase intentions.

<sup>2</sup> This emphasis on relationships in public relations practice is outlined in Ledingham & Brunig (2000).

they have received benefits from each other), and *communal relationship* (both parties provide benefits to each other because they are concerned for the welfare of the other).

Research has demonstrated that credible sources have a positive impact on attitudes toward both an advertisement and the brand. Atkin and Block (1983) found that celebrity endorsers (versus similar non-celebrity endorsers) were perceived as more trustworthy, competent (expertise), and more attractive in alcohol advertising. Moreover, the source credibility ratings of the endorsers extended to the message and products. In another study, Goldberg and Hartwick, (1990) - testing Fishbein and Azjen's (1975) source credibility framework that posits that source credibility affects the probability that a message claim will be accepted - manipulated levels of advertiser (i.e. corporate) expertise and trustworthiness and claim extremity on a rank order scale of product brands. Goldberg and Hartwick (1990) found that corporate credibility moderated evaluations of ad credibility and product evaluation, that is, higher corporate credibility led to more positive evaluations of ad credibility and product.

### **Corporate Social Responsibility**

One way organizations seek to improve relationships with their stakeholders is by engaging in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and activities. The definitions of corporate social responsibility are plentiful, generally indicating that corporations operate within social norms and encompass activities aimed at creating a safe and supportive work environment for employees, operating in a manner conscious of impact on outside environment, and contributing to the health of society in general (Seitel, 1995). In academic literature, CSR has been conceptualized as pro-social corporate endeavors designed to improve relations with company stakeholders (Murray & Vogel, 1997), corporate social performance (Turban & Greening 1997), to a more socially proactive view of long-term goals related to CSR as part of a dynamic social system (McGee 1998). Further researchers have conceptualized CSR as a

company's status in terms of its responsiveness to its perceived societal obligations (Brown & Dancin, 1997, Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). The latter definition is most relevant in the context of this thesis, as it incorporates the idea of 'status' that can be interpreted as a competitive advantage, i.e. those corporations that are perceived to be meeting their social obligations will reap economic benefits.

Furthermore, public opinion polls indicate that the American public is supportive of companies engaging in CSR activities, specifically that consumers will reward those companies they perceive as strengthening communities ([www.cause-branding.com](http://www.cause-branding.com)). In fact, a 2001 poll conducted in November of 2001 by Roper and Cone Inc. showed a dramatic increase (before and after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks) in the demand of Americans for corporate attention to social needs, and a willingness to financially support those companies that do. Additionally, the 2001 Cone/Roper poll indicated that employees are more proud to work for companies with CSR initiatives, have more loyalty to companies with CSR initiatives, and many employees would actively seek out employment from a company that had CSR versus one that did not (provided similar pay and working conditions).

### **Endorsers**

An important aspect of a company adopting these CSR programs is communicating its activities to their stakeholders. This communication often takes place in the form of advertisements describing the activities/programs in a print ad and/or is included on the company's website. These CSR messages should be credible, i.e. the targeted audience must believe that the organization is sincere in its adoption of these policies. If the audience perceives the CSR message to be contrived (or only in the self-interest of the company), the relationship can be damaged, possibly resulting in a loss of competitive advantage from CSR activities. Basically, the perception of corporate credibility is vital in CSR messages.

A popular advertising vehicle is the use of endorsers<sup>3</sup> for products. Research has examined the credibility of endorsers based on certain attributes, i.e. expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990), and the effect of audience attitude toward the advertisement/message. Furthermore, research has been conducted on the impact of endorsers on perceived credibility of the organization as well as endorser credibility effect on attitude toward the advertisement. Results of this research indicate that perceived endorser credibility is correlated with positive attitude toward the advertisement (Goldsmith et al., 2000; Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999).

This study focuses on the ‘attractiveness’ attribute related to endorser credibility. Physical attractiveness is the independent variable of interest in this study for one very important reason: it is the most readily available and visible (and sometimes the only available) variable that is presented by an endorser.<sup>4</sup> The Source Attractiveness Model posits that the effectiveness of a message is related to the *similarity*, *familiarity*, and *liking* of an endorser (McGuire, 1968), as well as audience desire to identify with attractive endorsers (Kelman, 1961). The basic premise of this model is that attractive endorsers are perceived as more credible and are therefore more effective at selling the product or idea in the advertisement (Erdogan et al., 2001). McGuire (1985) argues that attractiveness is important to persuasive impact to the extent that the receiver is motivated to enhance sense of self, social reputation, or gratifying role relationships by identifying with admired sources and introjecting their attitudes (also known as ‘identification’: Kelman, 1961). The concept of “likeability”, a common sense assumption that a likeable source is more attractive, is supported by research (see: Sampson & Insko, 1964). Research on source

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<sup>3</sup> Note: At this stage, I am not distinguishing between type of endorser/spokesperson/model. As you will read later, the focus will be on one attribute (i.e. attractiveness) and how it relates to perceived credibility of a message.

<sup>4</sup> This assumption assumes that levels of expertise and all other potential confounding variables related to an endorser’s perceived credibility are held constant.

“familiarity”, knowledge of the source through exposure, has shown that social reinforcement is more effective when the reinforcing sources is a familiar and liked person (see: McArthur & Zigler, 1969). The concept of “similarity” draws from Kelman’s (1961) concept of ‘introjection’ (or identification), which is based on a receiver’s attempt to identify with or being in a positive relationship to a source made attractive by his or her similarity, familiarity, likeability, etc. (McGuire, 1985). Though McGuire’s (1985) model of source attractiveness is a useful framework for understanding endorser attractiveness as it relates to perceived credibility, attractiveness of endorsers in this study will be operationalized and measured purely in terms of physical attractiveness.

Research has explored the differences between using highly attractive versus normally or unattractive endorsers in advertising, indicating that the level of attractiveness needed is related to the type of product being marketed (Bower & Landreth, 2001; Erdogan et al., 2001). Moreover, studies have examined the effect of model attractiveness and product type on perceptions of credibility. Kamins (1990) and Kahle and Homer (1985) examined the ‘match-up’ hypothesis of endorser attractiveness, which posits that the attractiveness level of an endorser is most credible when it ‘matches’ the function of a product, e.g. attractive spokespeople are perceived as more trustworthy and of high expertise for beauty-related products. Other research (Maddux & Rogers, 1980) has demonstrated that physical attractiveness is not always a cue for perceptions of greater trustworthiness and expertise, such as the advice given by doctors on a health issue.

## **Explaining the Attractiveness-Credibility Link: Attribution Theory – Social Psychology**

The majority of advertising studies related to the role of attractiveness in source credibility judgments offers evidence that people often make more positive judgments regarding a communicator's credibility based primarily on a physical attractiveness cue. Many of these studies are rooted in the substantive domain (Brinberg & McGrath, 1982), meaning that they begin with a practical problem, i.e. how to gain credibility for a certain product in a certain context, and develop a methodology to test that particular study. These studies often draw from differing theories to explain **why** this phenomenon occurs. Attribution theory offers a theoretical framework through which these studies can be interpreted.

Attribution theory has its origins in Fritz Heider's (1958) *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*, which offers a theoretical base for how individuals make causal inferences about everyday occurrences, that is, at a fundamental level people try to make sense of every phenomenon they encounter. An important concept in attribution theory is that of inferential processes – people arrive at judgments of causes based on an analytical process. Basically, people tend to overestimate the impact of features that are salient in the perceiver's environment. The first step in forming an impression of a person is to observe their behavior. Those elements that are most salient, i.e. most prominent from the perspective of the perceiver will be the most important when a person makes a judgment.

From this theoretical base, research has shown that on contact with the appearance or behavior of another, a person will make inferences about the person or organization that correspond with the observation. This is known as the 'fundamental attribution error' (Ross, 1977; Jones & Nisbett, 1972) because people attribute qualities to people based on this initial impression that actually may be caused by

other situational constraints. This phenomenon is also referred to as the ‘halo effect’ (Thorndike, 1920), which posits that people tend to overestimate the covariance between traits or behaviors (Feeley, 2002). Moreover, the ‘salient dimension model’ of the halo effect refers to the tendency of the assessment of an individual on one trait, such as physical attractiveness (Dion, et al., 1972), to influence evaluations of that person on other traits. Studies have demonstrated evidence that people will attribute positive qualities to more physically attractive sources (see: Ashmore et al., 1996; Calvert, 1988.)

### **Outcomes of Attractiveness**

An important and often-cited study related to the link between physical attractiveness and perceptions of credibility is Patzer (1983), in which attractiveness was conceptualized as an underlying construct of source credibility attributes.<sup>5</sup> The study examined the relationship between communicator physical attractiveness and source credibility within a marketing context, with physical appearance defined in terms of facial appearance and the degree to which a stimulus (person’s face) is pleasing to observe. The basic premise underlying this study is the stereotype of ‘what is beautiful is good’ (Dion, et al., 1972). Interpersonal interactions research has demonstrated that people make more positive attributions about an attractive person such as:

- Attractive people have greater social power (Mills & Aronson, 1965)
- Attractive people are perceived to possess more favorable personal and non-personal characteristics such as intelligence and personality traits (Dion et al., 1972; Miller, 1970)
- Attractive people have more positive effects on other people and receive more positive responses from other people (McGuire, 1969)

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<sup>5</sup> In this case, expertise, trustworthiness, and liking.



- Attractive people are more persuasive (see: Baker & Churchill, 1977; Chaiken, 1979).

Based on these studies of attractiveness in interpersonal relations, Patzer (1983) conducted an experiment in which participants viewed fictitious advertisements that included three levels of attractiveness – low, medium, and high. The dependent variables included 1) perceived trustworthiness and expertise of the communicator and 2) liking for the communicator if they were to meet. The results of the data analysis support the hypothesis that communicators of higher levels of attractiveness are perceived as more trustworthy and of higher expertise than those of lower attractiveness levels. The data strongly supported the hypothesis that attractiveness has a significant positive effect on liking of the communicator. Overall, the results offer evidence of a relationship between communicator physical attractiveness and perceptions of communicator expertise, trustworthiness, and liking regardless of communicator/receiver gender.

### **Endorser Credibility and Corporate Credibility -- What's the Relationship?**

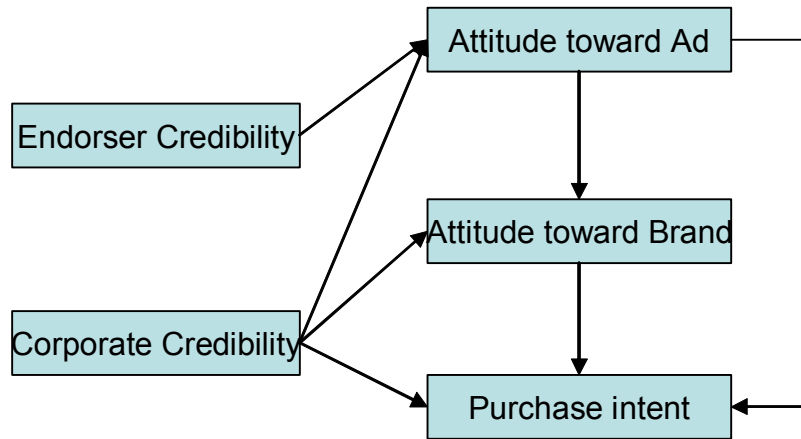
Several studies have examined the effects of both corporate and source credibility on consumers' attitudes toward the brand and advertisement, as well as purchase intentions. While much advertising research has focused on the effectiveness of endorsers on consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions (as a function of the endorser's credibility), more recent research has examined the role of corporate credibility as well. Researchers have examined endorser and corporate credibility as separate variables; this is generally conceptualized in the literature as companies concern for having a credible endorser represent their brand, while also being concerned with presenting a positive corporate image by engaging in socially responsible activities (Lafferty and Goldsmith, 1999) to enhance their corporate credibility.

Goldsmith et al. (2000) conducted a study to test the impact of both endorser and corporate credibility influences on consumer attitudes and purchase intention, in which *corporate credibility* was defined as the reputation of a company in terms of its honesty and expertise. Goldsmith et al. (2000) developed a partially fictitious advertisement for participants to evaluate. Specifically, the researchers used a real brand (Mobil Oil) with an actual advertisement that was old enough not to be remembered (taken from a several-month-old edition of the *Wall Street Journal*). The researchers added in an artificial celebrity endorsement from Tom Brokaw, which included a picture and testimonial. The purpose of the original ad was to persuade readers that Mobil was committed to pro-environmental packaging (an attempt to enhance the company image). A questionnaire was developed regarding the advertisement, which included items to assess endorser credibility, corporate credibility, attitudes toward the advertisement, attitude toward the brand, and purchasing intentions. Students in two marketing classes were asked to distribute questionnaires to non-student adults. One hundred and fifty-two adult participants viewed the fictitious advertisement and answered questions regarding the credibility of the ad's endorser (in this case Tom Brokaw), the credibility of the company, as well as attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intentions.

Findings in the Goldsmith et al. (2000) study provide support for the following conclusions: 1) corporate credibility influences a viewer's attitude toward the brand and advertisement as well as purchase intentions 2) endorser credibility works only through its impact on attitude toward the ad and attitude toward the brand. Basically, these findings suggest that merely having a highly credible endorser is not enough to generate positive feelings toward the brand and purchase intentions. The use of such endorsers should be used strategically to enhance long-term corporate credibility.

In a related study, Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999) examined the effects of endorser and corporate credibility on consumers' attitude toward the brand, attitude toward the ad, and purchase intentions. A 2 X 2 experiment (high versus low corporate credibility and high versus low endorser credibility) between subjects design was used. One hundred female students were shown 4 fictitious magazine advertisements and were asked to evaluate the credibility of the endorser using Ohanian's (1990) endorser credibility scale and Newell's (1993) corporate credibility scale. Additionally, participants indicated their attitudes toward the brand and advertisements as well as purchase intentions. The results of their experiment indicated that both types of credibility influence attitude toward the ad and the brand, but that corporate credibility alone has a significant influence on purchase intentions. Additionally, endorser credibility has a greater influence on attitude toward the ad while corporate credibility has a greater influence on attitude toward the brand and purchase intentions indicating that people look more to the endorser credibility for judgments about the ad and corporate credibility for judgments about the brand. In this study, the effects of endorser and corporate credibility were independent and did not interact.

Finally, Lafferty et al. (2002) propose a theory of the combined influence of corporate and endorser credibility, shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1 – Lafferty et al.’s (2002) Dual Credibility Model**

What the Lafferty et al. (2002) model and other research on endorser/corporate credibility do not explicitly test is the relationship between endorser credibility and corporate credibility –an assumption is made in this thesis that researchers presume this. In the context of social responsibility advertisements and messages, the two should not be examined as separate phenomena, as an endorser is used as a means of enhancing the credibility of an organization (not to sell a product). Research has not directly addressed the use of endorsers for social responsibility activities or whether judgments made about the endorser in a message affects the overall perceived credibility of the organization. In CSR messages, the more important factor is whether or not the company is perceived to be credible (versus the endorser), as one of the major reasons for engaging in such activities is to enhance the reputation of the organization. This study seeks to examine how endorsers in a CSR message affect subjects’ perceptions of credibility of the organization communicating the message.

### **Role of Cognitive “Involvement”**

Another important consideration in studies related to endorser credibility and organizational credibility is the concept of cognitive involvement. Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann (1983), describe via the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981), that there are two routes to changing attitudes in advertising: the central and peripheral routes. The central route includes a person diligently considering information in forming or changing an attitude, while the peripheral route refers to attitude change being the result of the attitude issue or object being associated with positive or negative cues. Furthermore, Infante et al. (2003) describe ELM related to source credibility claiming that if a person takes the peripheral route, there is little or no issue-related thinking regarding a message. In this case, a person will be more apt to base message acceptance on the trustworthiness, expertise, or attractiveness of the source (p. 134).

According to Petty and Cacioppo (1981), an important moderator regarding which route a person will take in evaluating advertising is involvement, where high involvement messages have greater personal relevance and consequences than low involvement messages.

Other researchers (Kahle & Homer, 1985) have examined the role of cognitive involvement through the Social Adaptation (SA) theory (Kahle, 1984). Kahle and Homer (1985) describe SA theory as implying that “the adaptive significance of information will determine its impact...information based on salience may be processed but its influence may be based on usefulness for adaptation” (p. 954). Furthermore, Kahle and Homer (1985) distinguish SA theory from Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann’s ELM perspective in that SA posits that information is processed in the same way for low and high involvement conditions, but just ends earlier for low involvement. In SA, the quality and type of information also counts in low

involvement attitude change (versus the positivity and augmentation of information considered in the ELM model). Thus, Kahle and Homer argue that the SA theory fits well with the Match-Up Hypothesis/Effect in advertising research (Kamins, 1990; Lynch & Schuler, 1994), which posits that congruence between characteristics of endorser and product attributes is related to higher perceptions of source credibility.

### **Research Questions:**

*RQ1 – Does the use of an attractive endorser lead to greater perceptions of organizational credibility (in terms of perceived organizational expertise and trustworthiness) in CSR messages than a less attractive endorser?*<sup>6</sup>

*RQ2 – Will the type of company affect perceptions of credibility, e.g. will companies related to physical attractiveness be perceived as more credible with an attractive endorser?*

*RQ3 – Will level of involvement in the social causes affect perceptions of organizational credibility (as a function of endorser physical attractiveness)?*

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<sup>6</sup> Note – this research question presents an implied test of the halo effect or fundamental attribution error conceptualized in terms of whether subjects will attribute credibility of an endorser (based on physical attractiveness) to the credibility of the organization.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **EXPECTATIONS**

Past research on the effectiveness and credibility of physically attractive endorsers has been conducted in terms of selling a commercial product. The results of these studies support the ‘match-up’ hypothesis and/or Social Adaptation theory as related to attractiveness in advertising products, which posits that physical attractiveness of endorser is relevant for beauty-related products as opposed to every-day products.

Interpersonal and social psychological research has demonstrated that physical attractiveness often leads people to make positive personality attributions to physically attractive communicators, including perceptions of source credibility (Patzer, 1983). Furthermore, attribution theory supports the claim that people seek to make sense of their lives, and often make attributions about people with very little information.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty et al., 1983) posits that when a person has a higher degree of involvement in a subject matter, he or she will spend more time actively considering information related to making decisions or judgments about that subject. This line of research would suggest those participants that are highly involved, i.e. concerned, with certain social issues – in this case breast cancer - will be less likely to rely on heuristics such as physical attractiveness to make judgments about the credibility of the organization and credibility of the endorser. According to the ELM, those individuals with high involvement should be more likely to actively process the information and weigh many factors.

In the setting of this study where a CSR advertisement is the message, the only information that a person will have about an endorser (other than the fictitious

qualifications given<sup>7</sup>), is the endorser's physical appearance. Based on the theoretical basis of attribution theory, one can assume that a person viewing the CSR advertisement will make attributions about the endorser based solely on the one variable presented to the viewer: physical attractiveness. Interpersonal relations research has demonstrated that people tend to make positive attributions about physically attractive people. From this theoretical basis, one would expect that people would tend to make more positive attributions of credibility to endorsers with a higher level of physical attractiveness. Because these advertisements are not selling a product, but rather an idea, the physical attractiveness of the endorser does not play a relevant role in selling the idea. Rather, the physical appearance is only a variable that a person may use to make inferences about the communicator's credibility.

Research on endorser attractiveness and perceived credibility of a message has focused primarily on commercial advertising. Companies and public relations professionals use advertising techniques to communicate with their stakeholders regarding their involvement in social responsibility activities.

Because the proposed research questions are exploratory in nature, there are different possibilities for outcomes:

- Based on attribution research, one would expect to find that those advertisements with the attractive endorsers will receive higher ratings of both organizational and endorser credibility.
- Based on the applied marketing studies reviewed, one would expect that physical attractiveness has no effect on perceptions of endorser and organizational credibility, as the physical attractiveness of the endorser is not directly related to the message of the ad. However, it is important to note that in the case that the organization is a beauty-related company -

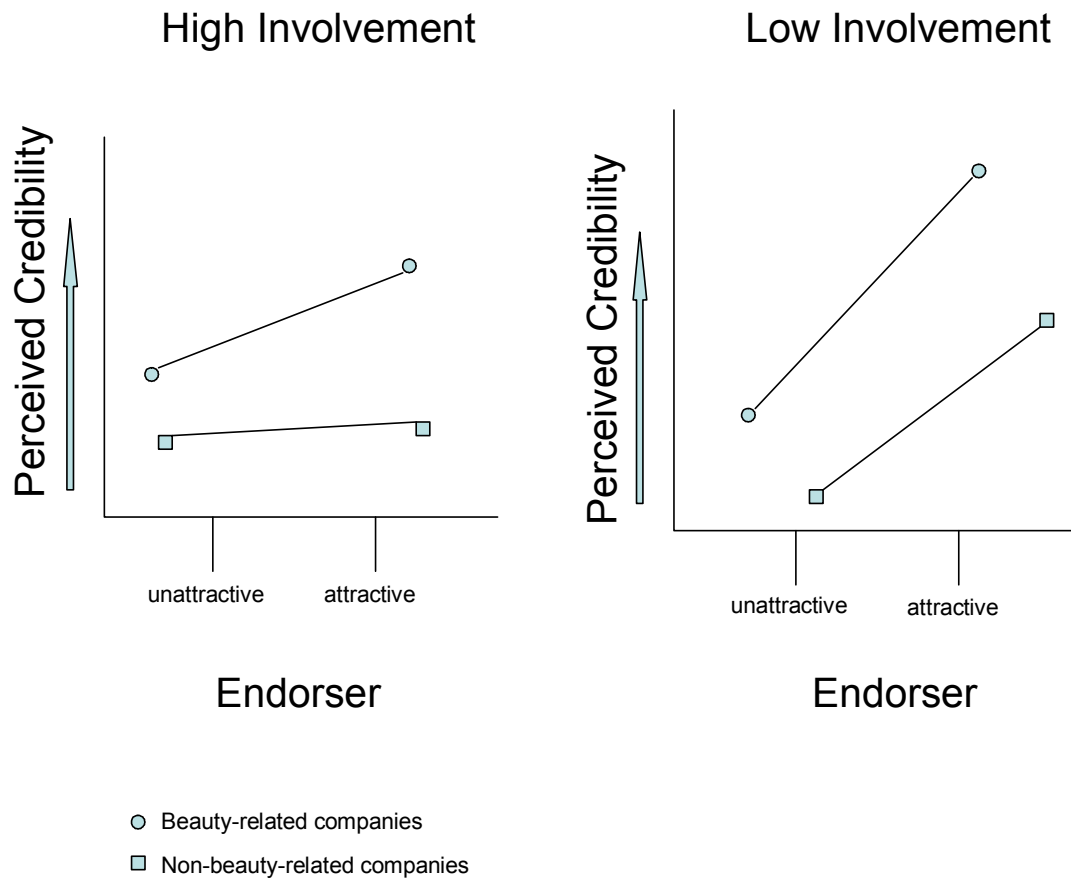
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<sup>7</sup> In all cases, a human resources manager at the company.



such as a cosmetics or clothing company - the type of organization is then related to beauty. This may result in endorsers of higher physical attractiveness leading to greater perceptions of endorser and organizational credibility.

- ELM research would suggest that only those participants with low involvement in the CSR issues being advertised or CSR in general would rely on the heuristic of physical attractiveness to make judgments of credibility of endorser and sponsoring organization.
- Finally, the results of the proposed experiments may demonstrate aspects of each of the three theoretical/research bodies. In this case, with high involvement, beauty-related companies would receive a higher rating of credibility with a high attractiveness endorser, but a very small (if any) increase in credibility would be observed for non-beauty-related companies. For low involvement, the overall increase in credibility due to endorser attractiveness would be higher than for high involvement. Furthermore, in the low involvement condition, beauty-related companies would receive a higher rating of credibility than non-beauty-related companies. (Please see Figure 3 below for a visual representation.)



**Figure 2 – Expected Findings**

### **Hypotheses:**

H1: The perceived credibility of the endorser of a social responsibility message will be positively correlated with the perceived credibility of the organization.

- H1a: Overall, attractiveness of endorsers should have a positive relationship with endorser credibility. This hypothesis is based on attribution and advertising/marketing research that suggests that attractive people receive higher ratings of credibility.

- H1b: Based on the same set of research, attractiveness should have a positive relationship with endorser trustworthiness.
- H1c: Based on the same set of research, attractiveness should have a positive relationship with endorser expertise.

H2: Based on the Match-Up Effect, there should be an interaction between attractiveness and company type with endorser credibility. Specifically, the combination of an attractive endorser and beauty company should get a significantly higher rating of credibility than the combination of attractive endorser and the pharmaceutical company.

H3: In a high involvement condition, people will rely less on the physical appearance of endorser when making judgments about organizational credibility than in a low involvement condition. (Note: Involvement refers to the amount of personal cognitive importance related to the topic of social responsibility, i.e. breast cancer). The differences between the judgments of endorser credibility (i.e. judgments based on the attractiveness of endorser) will be greater in the low involvement condition. Thus, higher levels of personal involvement will result in a smaller difference in means of endorser credibility between attractive and unattractive endorsers.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHOD**

This study used a 2 X 2 X 2 experimental design with three conditions: attractiveness of endorser, company type (cosmetics vs. pharmaceutical), and the order/combination of endorser type and company type. The outcome variables are endorser credibility and organizational credibility. A total of 137 students from three communication classes participated in the study, completing a three-part questionnaire that included two CSR advertisements. The first part of the questionnaire included questions related to the participants' perceptions of corporate credibility based on Grunig and Hon's (1999) "Guidelines for Measuring Relationships in Public Relations". The second section of the questionnaire required the participants to view the CSR ad again and rate the credibility of the endorser based on Ohanian's (1990) endorser credibility scale. In the final section of the questionnaire, participants answered questions related to their cognitive involvement with breast cancer research. Data from this section of the questionnaire serve to measure the level of involvement of participants related to the social responsibility issue/ topic, i.e. breast cancer research, which the companies are involved in.

#### **Stimulus Materials**

The stimulus materials included two fictitious company advertisements. The focus was on testing the prototype of a CSR message to lessen the chance of participants being influenced by pre-existing attitudes toward a real company; therefore, fictitious companies were created to be the organizations in the ads. Two different companies were used (to control for company type influencing perceptions of

source credibility). Each person viewed two advertisements with two different companies, two very similar messages about involvement in breast cancer research and two different endorsers (one attractive, one unattractive). The company types used were a cosmetics company (called “Azure Cosmetics”) and a pharmaceutical company (called “Pharmco Pharmaceuticals”), where the cosmetics company represents a beauty-related company and the pharmaceutical company a non-beauty-related company. There were four combinations of the endorsers and companies (see Table 1 below). Additionally, public relations scholars have suggested that a CSR campaign or initiative should be connected to an organization’s brand or identity (Daugherty, 2001), so a pharmaceutical and cosmetics company were chosen because both types of companies are related to breast cancer research (one with a woman focus and the other with a focus on medical research).

**Table 1**

***Research Design***

	<b>Azure Cosmetics</b>	<b>Pharmco Pharmaceuticals</b>
Attractive endorser 1	1	4
Attractive endorser 2	3	2
Unattractive endorser 3	2	1
Unattractive endorser 4	4	3

The messages (as would appear in a magazine or website) stated the company’s involvement in a social responsibility activity, i.e. breast cancer research, and were accompanied by a headshot picture of the company’s Human Resources

manager endorsing the activity. Participants answered questions related to corporate credibility of the company after viewing each ad. To control for order effects, the surveys were constructed so subjects saw pairings of the following stimuli, such that each person viewed two advertisements with one attractive and one unattractive endorser where no message or image was repeated and to control for order effects:

- 2 – attractive endorsers
- 2 –unattractive endorsers
- 2 messages – The messages were very similar in style and content, but varied by cause, e.g. breast cancer research versus children's health.

Based on this ordering approach, eight versions of the survey were created with the following combinations of endorsers, messages, and companies (see Table 2).

**Table 2*****Survey Versions***

<b>Version</b>	<b>1st endorser</b>	<b>1st company</b>	<b>2nd endorser</b>	<b>2nd company</b>
1	Attractive 1	azure	Unattractive 1	pharmco
2	Unattractive 1	pharmco	Attractive 1	azure
3	Unattractive 2	azure	Attractive 2	pharmco
4	Attractive 2	pharmco	Unattractive 2	azure
5	Unattractive 1	azure	Attractive 1	pharmco
6	Attractive 1	pharmco	Unattractive 1	azure
7	Attractive 2	azure	Unattractive 2	pharmco
8	Unattractive 2	pharmco	Attractive 2	azure

**Independent Variable: Attractiveness of the Endorser**

Physical attractiveness was measured in terms of facial attractiveness. Headshots of females were used in an effort to reduce confounding factors such as body language. Photos were obtained from on-line sources such as websites for professional executive portraits.

**Attractiveness and Believability Pretest**

The ‘truth of consensus’ approach is a method to determine attractiveness levels as high, normal, or low (Patzner, 1983). Research has demonstrated that regardless of individual preference, a high degree of agreement exists between judges in determining a person’s level of attractiveness. A method termed ‘truth of consensus’ is used to determine physical attractiveness in research settings in which a

sample of people judge a variety of photos and assess level of attractiveness. If a substantial number of people rate a person in the same level of attractiveness, then the person (image of person) can be used to represent that level of attractiveness.

Eighteen participants from a representative sample of the future participants in the survey (students in a Communication class at Cornell) viewed 27 headshots and rated the person's attractiveness using a bipolar scale (attractiveness vs. unattractiveness) using a Likert-type 10-point continuum. In addition to ascertaining the perceived level of attractiveness of the potential endorsers, this pre-test also assessed the believability of the people as the CEO of a large company. Participants were asked to rate the believability of each potential endorser for each of four occupations: CEO of a large company, sixth grade teacher, restaurant bartender, and human resources manager.

The original plan was to select the four stimulus spokespersons for the conditions of attractive and unattractive with highest ratings of physical attractiveness and CEO believability to represent the 'attractive endorser' condition and the two images with lowest rating of attractiveness and highest ratings of CEO believability to represent the 'unattractive endorser' condition. Instead four stimulus spokespersons were chosen, but the HR manager title rather than CEO was used.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See "Results" section for full explanation and results of attractiveness pretest.



### **Dependent Variables: Corporate Credibility and Endorser Credibility**

To measure corporate credibility, the Grunig and Hon (1999) relationship scale was chosen over the Newell and Goldsmith (2001) corporate credibility scale because the Grunig/Hon scale worked better for a fictitious company as well as better for the selling of a concept. The Newell/Goldsmith scale, on the other hand, fit better for a known company selling a product. Specifically, the Grunig/Hon scale measures a relationship (trust/integrity), which is more relevant to measuring perceptions related to a company's selling of a concept, i.e. corporate social responsibility. Additionally, the Grunig/Hon scale was constructed around the idea that organizations create a relationship with their public, which behaves similarly to interpersonal relationships (Ledingham & Brunig, 2000). This idea fits better with the concept of public relations (selling an idea) rather than advertising (selling a product). Additionally, because the Newell/Goldsmith scale was focused on elements of expertise as well as trustworthiness, this required that a respondent know something about the company. Since this study used fictitious companies, the New/Goldsmith scale was not appropriate.

The participants in this proposed study were asked to agree or disagree on a 10-point Likert scale with nine scale items related to corporate credibility. The scale includes the following items of organizational credibility (Grunig & Hon, 1999):

1. This organization would treat people like me fairly.
2. If this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.
3. This organization can be relied upon to keep its promises.
4. I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.
5. I feel very confident about this organization's skills.

6. This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
7. Sound principles seem to guide this organization's behavior.
8. This organization would not mislead people like me.
9. I am very willing to let this organization make decisions for people like me.

After participants answered the questions related to organizational credibility for each of the two CSR advertisements, they viewed the ad a second time<sup>9</sup> and answered questions related to endorser credibility (Ohanian, 1990), which includes constructs of credibility, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Participants rated the endorsers on a scale of one to 10 (where one represented that the person absolutely did not have that attribute and 10 meaning that the endorser absolutely did represent that attribute). See Table 3 below for the endorser credibility measures.

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<sup>9</sup> The ad was shrunk and placed on the same page as the endorser credibility scale.

**Table 3*****Ohanian's (1990) Endorser Credibility Scale***

<b>Attractiveness Items</b>	<b>Trustworthiness Items</b>	<b>Expertise Items</b>
Attractive – Unattractive	Trustworthy – Untrustworthy	Expert – Not Expert
Classy – Not Classy	Dependable – Undependable	Experience – Inexperienced
Beautiful – Ugly	Honest – Dishonest	Knowledgeable – Unknowledgeable
Elegant – Plain	Reliable – Unreliable	Qualified – Unqualified
Sexy – Not Sexy	Sincere – Insincere	Skilled - Unskilled

Results from the endorser credibility section were tested to see if they correlated with the results of perceived organizational credibility (see “Results” section). In addition, the attractiveness portion of the endorser credibility scale will serve as a manipulation check of physical attractiveness. Based on reliability scores (see “Results” section), the 15 items related to endorser credibility had a high enough alpha score to combine into a single summed variable (referred to as “endcred” in the data set).

Furthermore, based on alpha scores (see “Results” section) of the three constructs underlying the endorser credibility scale, i.e. attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise, the following variables were created:

- Perceived endorser attractiveness (enattrac) is a summation of the 5 attractiveness items presented in Figure 6 (10 point scale for each item, range of 5 -50).
  - Enattrac1 is a dichotomous measure of perceived endorser attractiveness where 0 = unattractive (1-28) and 1 = attractive (29-

50). This division was determined based on the median score of perceived endorser attractiveness.

- The endorser expertise (endknow) variable is a summation of the five expertise items presented in Figure 6 (10 point scale for each item, range of 5-50).
- The endorser trustworthiness variable (endtrust) is a summation of the 5 trustworthiness variables presented in Figure 6 (10 point scale for each item, range of 5-50).

In addition, a second measure of endorser credibility was created comprised of the five-item endorser trustworthiness and endorser expertise scale. This decision was based on the fact that because the attractiveness level of the endorser was manipulated as part of the study (and thus, attractiveness is treated as an independent variable), it was logical to create a dependent variable of endorser credibility that did not include attractiveness as an underlying construct. The results and conclusions sections will elaborate on this further.

### Control Variable

To measure personal involvement, survey respondents answered the following question on a 10-point scale:

How important personally is breast cancer research to you, on a scale of 1 (not at all important) to 10 (extremely important)?

**Table 4**

*Frequency Table for Personal Involvement Variable*

<b>Personal Importance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
2.00	4	1.5	1.5	1.5
3.00	6	2.2	2.2	3.7
4.00	10	3.7	3.7	7.4
5.00	8	2.9	2.9	10.3
6.00	26	9.6	9.6	19.9
7.00	48	17.6	17.6	37.5
8.00	48	17.6	17.6	55.1
9.00	48	17.6	17.6	72.8
10.00	74	27.2	27.2	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

The results, shown in Table 4, indicated that the data were right-skewed and that the median score was 8. Therefore, a dichotomous variable was created where 0 = low involvement (0-8) and 1 = high involvement (9-10). Frequencies of the new dichotomous variable for personal involvement (persinv) are presented in the results section. The mean for the dichotomous personal involvement variable was .4485 and the standard deviation .4983.

### Other Variables

In addition to those variables described above, several other variables were created:

- “Attract” indicates the objective measure of attractiveness of the endorser, which was based on the attractiveness pretest (1 = attractive, 0 = unattractive).
- “Company” indicates the company type (0 = azure, 1 = pharmco).
- “Class” indicates the class that answered the survey, where 1 = Communication 376, 2 = Communication 282, and 3 = Visual Communication. Due to differences in outcomes of class 3 versus class 1 and 2, I created a dummy variable (dumclass) to act as a covariate in ANOVA tests to control for the difference between classes (Class 3=1 and Classes 1 and 2 =0).
- “Version” indicates the version of the survey given. Each version included a different order of the four combinations, such that each person saw two combinations.

## **CHAPTE FIVE**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Pretest Results**

Table 5 presents results from the attractiveness pretest. Because the believability ratings for CEO were so varied, it was difficult to choose images that were different enough in attractiveness to use for the endorser picture. Also, the most believable CEO's were concentrated around the higher levels of attractiveness, which meant that it would be difficult to choose four believable CEO's with enough difference between them in physical attractiveness. Consequently, the Human Resources Manager title was chosen rather than CEO because the ratings of HR manager believability for the two most and two least attractive images were very close. Additionally, the overall variance of the HR manager believability condition was much less than the variance of the CEO believability condition. Table 5 presents the average ratings of attractiveness and occupation believability for the 18 participants.

**Table 5*****Attractiveness Pretest Results***

<b>Image#</b>	<b>Mean Attractiveness</b>	<b>Mean CEO believability</b>	<b>Mean bartender believability</b>	<b>Mean teacher believability</b>	<b>Mean HR mgr. believability</b>
<b>18</b>	3.24	5.62	1.62	6.29	5.90
<b>5</b>	3.52	2.90	2.43	7.52	6.43
<b>19</b>	3.71	2.67	4.71	7.05	4.57
<b>4</b>	3.81	3.76	2.62	7.10	6.24
<b>9</b>	4.38	3.48	5.19	4.76	5.67
<b>17</b>	4.48	4.10	1.90	6.48	6.48
<b>14</b>	4.62	4.38	2.24	6.86	6.38
<b>6</b>	4.67	4.71	2.71	6.57	6.90
<b>3</b>	4.71	4.67	2.62	6.90	7.48
<b>13</b>	4.71	5.90	1.81	6.24	6.52
<b>7</b>	4.90	3.48	6.19	5.24	5.52
<b>11</b>	4.95	3.57	3.19	7.10	6.33
<b>12</b>	5.00	4.86	2.86	5.81	7.19
<b>16</b>	5.29	5.10	2.43	5.71	7.10
<b>27</b>	5.48	4.31	3.97	6.84	6.15
<b>1</b>	5.62	5.10	2.57	7.00	7.48
<b>24</b>	5.81	6.43	2.62	5.62	6.71
<b>20</b>	5.95	6.19	1.90	6.52	7.19
<b>8</b>	6.10	6.52	4.86	5.86	6.67
<b>15</b>	6.10	6.48	3.00	4.48	6.52
<b>26</b>	6.10	5.90	3.43	5.90	6.86
<b>2</b>	6.52	6.81	4.10	3.62	6.05
<b>10</b>	6.57	6.67	2.38	6.24	6.48
<b>22</b>	7.19	1.95	8.14	5.65	4.50
<b>23</b>	7.19	3.43	6.86	5.05	5.33
<b>21</b>	8.33	5.55	4.38	5.65	6.35
<b>25</b>	8.86	3.86	6.10	5.33	6.19
<b>Mean</b>	<b>5.47</b>	<b>4.73</b>	<b>3.54</b>	<b>6.07</b>	<b>6.34</b>
<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>1.38</b>	<b>1.40</b>	<b>1.70</b>	<b>.97</b>	<b>.77</b>

The following four figures present the images chosen to serve as the two attractive and two unattractive endorser conditions in this study.





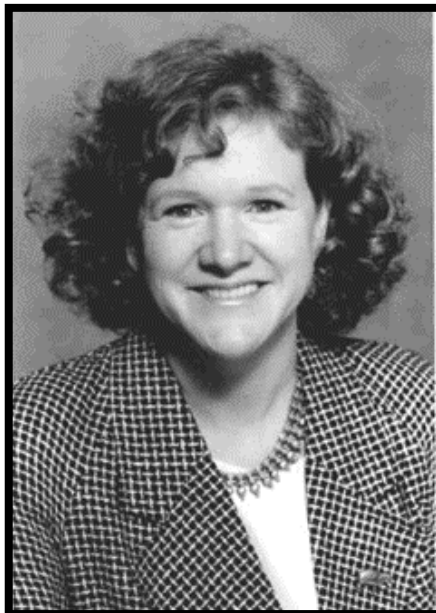
**Figure 3 – Attractive Endorser 1 (Image 21 – Pretest)**



**Figure 4 – Attractive Endorser 2 (Image 25 – Pretest)**



**Figure 5 – Unattractive Endorser 1 (Image 18 – Pretest)**



**Figure 6 – Unattractive Endorser 2 (Image 5 - Pretest)**

### Demographic and Involvement Frequencies

The following tables present the frequencies of the demographic (gender) and involvement variables.

**Table 6**

*Frequencies for Gender*

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Male</b>	26	19.1
<b>Female</b>	110	80.9

**Table 7**

*Frequency Table for Dichotomous Personal Involvement Variable*

Personal Involvement	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Low	150	55.1	55.1	55.1
High	122	44.9	44.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

### Control Variables

Statistical analyses determined that the demographic variables of gender and class (three different Communications classes completed the survey) had significant differences for some outcome variables. Therefore, these variables were put into every ANOVA test as covariates to control for these differences. Note: the class variable was put in as the dummy variable (dumclass), where 0 = class 1 and class 2 and 1 = class 3 because class 3 was significantly different from the other two classes.

## Outcome Variables – Corporate Credibility and Endorser Credibility

### Reliability scores for Scales

To test the reliability of the corporate credibility scale, a reliability test using Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was run for the nine variables. Because the alpha score was sufficiently high a new variable "cocred" was create, which represented a sum of all nine items (see Table 8).

**Table 8**

#### *Alphas scores for Corporate Credibility Scale<sup>10</sup>*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Alpha if item deleted</b>
Company Credibility1	.90
Company Credibility 2	.91
Company Credibility 3	.90
Company Credibility 4	.91
Company Credibility 5	.90
Company Credibility 6	.91
Company Credibility 7	.91
Company Credibility 8	.90
Company Credibility 9	.91
<b>Scale Mean</b>	<b>56.04</b>
<b>Scale SD</b>	<b>13.94</b>
<b>Scale <math>\alpha</math></b>	<b>.9165</b>

<sup>10</sup> See "Method" section for questions relating to Company Credibility 1,2,3, etc.

Reliability of the endorser attractiveness variable was also tested using Cronbach's alpha. The scale is comprised of three elements, i.e. attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise, with five measures for each for a total of 15 items (see Table 9).

**Table 9**

***Alpha Scores for Endorser Credibility Scale***

<b>Endorser Credibility Variable</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math> if item deleted Attractiveness</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math> if item deleted Trustworthiness</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math> if item deleted Expertise</b>
Attractive – Unattractive	.8500		
Classy – Not Classy	.8428		
Beautiful – Ugly	.8503		
Elegant – Plain	.8524		
Sexy – Not Sexy	.8604		
Trustworthy – Untrustworthy		.8328	
Dependable – Undependable		.8306	
Honest – Dishonest		.8331	
Reliable – Unreliable		.8304	
Sincere – Insincere		.8308	
Expert – Not Expert			.8354
Experienced – Inexperienced			.8354
Knowledgeable – Unknowledgeable			.8323
Qualified – Unqualified			.8301
Skilled - Unskilled			.8307
<b>Scale mean</b>	<b>92.85</b>		
<b>Scale SD</b>	<b>17.47</b>		
<b>Alpha (n=15)</b>	<b>.8478</b>		

Because the scale had an overall alpha of .8478, a new variable (endcred) was created, which was calculated by summing the 15 items. Furthermore, as mentioned in the “Method” section, a variable was created with only the expertise and trustworthiness items, as attractiveness level of the endorsers was one of the manipulated factors in this study. This variable was chosen as the overall measure of endorser credibility because 1) it is illogical to use a scale with an underlying construct that is manipulated as an independent variable (specifically, endorser attractiveness) and 2) the overall alpha score for this endorser credibility scale is

higher than the scale with the five attractiveness variables included. Also, it should be noted that the five items for endorser expertise are correlated with the five items of endorser trustworthiness with a correlation score of .728 and significance of .000.

**Table 10**

***Endorser Credibility Scale without Attractiveness Items***

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Alpha if Item Deleted</b>
Trustworthy – Untrustworthy	.9554
Dependable – Undependable	.9541
Honest – Dishonest	.9562
Reliable – Unreliable	.9525
Sincere – Insincere	.9549
Expert – Not Expert	.9554
Experienced – Inexperienced	.9542
Knowledgeable – Unknowledgeable	.9535
Qualified – Unqualified	.9521
Skilled - Unskilled	.9527
<b>Mean</b>	<b>63.8465</b>
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>15.6433</b>
<b>Total Alpha</b>	<b>.9585</b>

Additionally, three separate measures related to endorsers were created from this scale – endknow (a sum of the five expertise items), endtrust (a sum of the five trustworthiness items) and enattrac (a sum of the five attractiveness items). Tables 11, 12, and 13 present the alphas for the scales for endorser expertise, endorser trust, and endorser attractiveness.

**Table 11**

***Reliability for Summed Endorser Attractiveness Scale***

<b>Variable</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math> if item deleted</b>
Attractive – Unattractive	.9063
Classy – Not Classy	.9288
Beautiful – Ugly	.9181
Elegant – Plain	.9140
Sexy – Not Sexy Endorser	.9213
<b>Mean</b>	<b>28.8952</b>
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>10.8778</b>
<b>Total Alpha</b>	<b>.9333</b>

**Table 12*****Reliability for Summed Endorser Trust Scale***

<b>Variable</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math> if item deleted</b>
Trustworthy – Untrustworthy	.9402
Dependable – Undependable	.9329
Honest – Dishonest	.9330
Reliable – Unreliable	.9301
Sincere – Insincere	.9468
<b>Mean</b>	<b>32.1443</b>
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>8.0546</b>
<b>Total Alpha</b>	<b>.9486</b>



**Table 13*****Reliability for Summed Endorser Expertise Scale***

<b>Variable</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math> if item deleted</b>
Expert – Not Expert	.9567
Experienced – Inexperienced	.9476
Knowledgeable – Unknowledgeable	.9459
Qualified – Unqualified	.9414
Skilled - Unskilled	.9468
<b>Mean</b>	<b>31.7022</b>
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>8.7728</b>
<b>Total Alpha</b>	<b>.9577</b>

**Relationships (Correlations) Between the Variables**

To ensure that the objective measure of attractiveness was valid, the variable was correlated with two measures of perceived attractiveness. Table 14 presents the correlation between the objective measure of attractiveness of endorser and the perceived level of attractiveness of endorser. The perceived level of attractiveness is measured by a summation of the five attractiveness items in the endorser credibility scale. Table 15 presents the correlation between the objective attractiveness measure and the single item (“attractive” vs. “unattractive”) in the endorser credibility model.

**Table 14*****Correlation of Objective and Perceived Attractiveness Variables***

		<b>Objective Attractiveness</b>	<b>Perceived Attractiveness</b>
Objective attractiveness	Pearson	1.000	.678
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	272	272
Perceived attractiveness	Pearson	.678	1.000
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	272	272

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 15*****Correlation of Objective and Single Item Scale Attractiveness***

		<b>Objective Attractiveness</b>	<b>1 Item perceived attractiveness</b>
Objective attractiveness	Pearson	1.000	.671
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	272	272
Perceived Attractiveness (1 item att. vs. unatt.)	Pearson	.671	1.000
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	272	272

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### Hypothesis Discussion

*H1: The perceived credibility of the endorser of a social responsibility message will be positively correlated with the perceived credibility of the organization.*

H1 was supported with the data from this study. Table 16 presents a correlation table with the results from a correlation test, which highlights a significant, positive relationship between endorser credibility (sum of 15-item scale with constructs of attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness) and company credibility (sum of nine items of corporate credibility). Note: endorser credibility was measured with the scale without the five attractiveness items in this test and all other tests involving endorser credibility.

**Table 16**

***Correlations of Endorser and Company Credibility***

		<b>Endorser Credibility</b>	<b>Company Credibility</b>
Endorser Credibility	Pearson	1.000	.465
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
Company Credibility	N	272	272
	Pearson	.457	1.000
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	272	272

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*H1a: Overall, the physical attractiveness of endorsers will have a positive relationship with endorser credibility.*

Hypothesis H1a was not supported in this study. In fact, the opposite of this hypothesis was supported by this data. An ANOVA test revealed that, overall, attractive endorsers received statistically significantly lower ratings of endorser credibility than unattractive endorsers. Table 17 presents the results of the ANOVA test. This model had an F statistic of 31.140, with a significance level of .000.

**Table 17**

***Credibility Means for Attractive and Unattractive Endorsers***

<b>Objective Attractiveness</b>	<b>Mean Endorser Credibility</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Unattractive	68.8676	136	14.8964
Attractive	58.8254	136	14.7849
<b>Total</b>	<b>63.8465</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>15.6433</b>

*H1b: Based on the same set of research, attractiveness should have a positive relationship with endorser trustworthiness.*

Hypothesis H1b was not supported with an ANOVA test. Just as in H1, the opposite of H1b's prediction was significantly supported by this analysis – there is a negative relationship between endorser attractiveness and perceptions of endorser trustworthiness. Table 18 below presents the means from a univariate ANOVA test in

which endorser trustworthiness is the dependent variable. In this model, the objective attractiveness variable had a significance level of .000.

**Table 18**

***Means for Dependent Variable: Endorser Trustworthiness***

	<b>Mean Endorser Trustworthiness</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>95% Confidence Interval</b>	
Endorser			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Unattractive	34.184	.663	32.878	35.489
Attractive	30.105	.663	28.799	31.410

\*\* Evaluated at covariates appeared in the model: gender = .8088, class = .5074.

*H1c: Based on the same set of research, attractiveness should have a positive relationship with endorser expertise.*

Similar to Hypotheses H1a and H1b, H1c was also not supported with an ANOVA test, and the opposite of H1c's prediction was significantly supported by this analysis – there is a negative relationship between endorser attractiveness and perceptions of endorser expertise. Table 19 below presents the means from a univariate ANOVA test in which endorser expertise is the dependent variable. In this model, the objective attractiveness variable was significant at a level of .000.

**Table 19*****Means for Dependent Variable: Endorser Expertise***

	<b>Mean Endorser Expertise</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>95% Confidence Interval</b>	
Endorser			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Unattractive	34.684	.705	33.296	36.071
Attractive	28.721	.705	27.333	30.108

Evaluated at covariates appeared in the model: gender = .8088, Class= .5074.

*H2: Based on the Match-Up Effect, there should be an interaction between attractiveness and company type with endorser credibility. Specifically, the combination of an attractive endorser and beauty company should get a significantly higher rating of credibility than that of the combination of attractive endorser and the pharmaceutical company.*

**Table 20***Univariate Analysis table for Dependent Variable Endorser Credibility*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	8882.770	5	1776.554	8.228	.000
Intercept	69151.764	1	69151.764	320.268	.000
Gender	974.432	1	974.432	4.513	.035
Class	51.774	1	51.774	.240	.625
Attractiveness	7064.826	1	7064.826	32.720	.000
Company Type	238.491	1	238.491	1.105	.294
Attractiveness *	554.822	1	554.822	2.570	.110
Company Type					
<b>Error</b>	57434.384	266	215.919		
<b>Total</b>	1175091.563	272			
<b>Corrected Total</b>	66317.154	271			

a R Squared = .134 (Adjusted R Squared = .118)

For the summed variable of endorser credibility, H2 is not supported. Table 20 presents findings from a univariate ANOVA with endorser credibility as the dependent variable with fixed factors of attractiveness and company type and covariates of gender and class. This analysis suggests that attractiveness alone is a significant variable (main effect) in determining endorser credibility but not the interaction between attractiveness and company type. Specifically, there is a significant difference between means of endorser credibility for attractive (mean= 58.543) and unattractive (mean= 68.807) endorsers, in which the mean endorser credibility for attractive endorsers is lower than that of the unattractive endorser.

The same univariate ANOVA test was run for dependent variables of endorser expertise and trustworthiness to see if this interaction was apparent. Table 21



illustrates that the findings are similar for a univariate ANOVA model with endorser trustworthiness as the dependent variable as the summed endorser credibility variable. That is, attractiveness has significance in the model. The relationship is negative between attractiveness and perceptions of endorser trustworthiness.

**Table 21**

*Univariate Analysis table for Dependent Variable Endorser Trustworthiness*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1654.091	5	330.818	5.525	.000
Intercept	43148.499	1	43148.499	720.618	.000
Gender	14.344	1	14.344	.240	.625
Class	358.333	1	358.333	5.984	.015
Attractiveness	1186.193	1	1186.193	19.810	.000
Company Type	77.859	1	77.859	1.300	.255
Attractiveness *	20.318	1	20.318	.339	.561
Company Type					
<b>Error</b>	<b>15927.308</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>59.877</b>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>298627.063</b>	<b>272</b>			
<b>Corrected Total</b>	<b>17581.399</b>	<b>271</b>			

R Squared = .094 (Adjusted R Squared = .077)

Table 22 presents the mean endorser trustworthiness with the fixed factor endorser trustworthiness, which illustrates that for endorser trustworthiness, the means were very similar for the endorsers regardless of company type, but were different in the attractive versus unattractive condition.

**Table 22**

*Means for Dependent Variable: Endorser Trustworthiness with Fixed Factors Attractiveness and Company Type*

		<b>Mean Endorser Trustworthiness</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>95% Confidence Interval</b>	
<b>Endorser</b>	<b>Company</b>			<b>Lower Bound</b>	<b>Upper Bound</b>
Unattractive	Cosmetics	34.475	1.002	32.503	36.448
	Pharmaceutical	33.954	.890	32.202	35.705
Attractive	Cosmetics	30.825	.890	29.074	32.577
	Pharmaceutical	29.192	1.002	27.219	31.164

Evaluated at covariates appeared in the model: gender = .8088, class= .5074.

For endorser expertise, the same univariate ANOVA was run. This model differed from the ANOVA's with the summed endorser credibility and endorser trustworthiness (as dependent variables) models. This analysis is similar as attractiveness was significant in the model, i.e. it is similar to the endorser trustworthiness model in that attractiveness had a negative relationship with perceived endorser expertise (see Table 23). Unlike the two previous models, however, the interaction between company type and attractiveness of endorser is significant in this model. Table 24 presents the means for endorser expertise with the fixed factors attractiveness and company type. This table illustrates that for the cosmetics company, the attractive endorser's perceived expertise was significantly higher for the cosmetics company versus the pharmaceutical company. Additionally, the unattractive endorser's perceived expertise was higher for the pharmaceutical company, though not at as high a difference as that of the attractive endorser and the

cosmetics company. It is important to note that the unattractive endorser retained overall higher ratings of expertise for both types of companies.

**Table 23**

*Univariate Analysis table for Dependent Variable Endorser Expertise*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	3175.040	5	635.008	9.553	.000
Intercept	45828.091	1	45828.091	689.423	.000
Gender	128.732	1	128.732	1.937	.165
Class	179.253	1	179.253	2.697	.102
Attractiveness	2461.287	1	2461.287	37.027	.000
Company Type	43.816	1	43.816	.659	.418
Attractiveness * Company Type	377.048	1	377.048	5.672	.018
<b>Error</b>	17681.838	266	66.473		
<b>Total</b>	294225.000	272			
<b>Corrected Total</b>	20856.879	271			

R Squared = .152 (Adjusted R Squared = .136)

**Table 24***Means for Dependent Variable: Endorser Expertise*

	<b>Mean Endorser Expertise</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>95% Confidence Interval</b>	
<b>Endorser</b>			<b>Lower Bound</b>	<b>Upper Bound</b>
Unattractive	34.590	.704	33.204	35.977
Attractive	28.532	.704	27.146	29.918

Evaluated at covariates appeared in the model: gender = .8088, class = .5074.

**Table 25***Means for Dependent Variable: Endorser Expertise with Attractiveness and Company Type Variables*

		<b>Mean Endorser Expertise</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>95% Confidence Interval</b>	
<b>Endorser</b>	<b>Company</b>			<b>Lower Bound</b>	<b>Upper Bound</b>
Unattractive	Cosmetics	33.797	1.056	31.719	35.875
	Pharmaceutical	35.384	.937	33.538	37.230
Attractive	Cosmetics	30.134	.937	28.288	31.980
	Pharmaceutical	26.930	1.056	24.852	29.009

Evaluated at covariates appeared in the model: SEX = .8088, DUMCLASS = .5074.

*H3: In a high involvement condition, people will rely less on the physical appearance of endorser when making judgments about organizational credibility than in a low involvement condition. Thus, higher levels of personal involvement will result in a smaller difference in means of endorser credibility between attractive and unattractive endorsers.*

Hypothesis 3 deals with the role of cognitive involvement in perceptions of endorser credibility. H3 was not supported by this test. Tables 26 and 27 present the findings of the univariate ANOVA model with attractiveness, company type, and personal involvement as the fixed factors. Table 26 presents the results from the univariate ANOVA, which shows a main effect for attractiveness (unattractive received higher endorser credibility ratings) and for personal involvement. Figures 7 and 8 on page 58 highlight the fact that the difference in means was actually greater for those with high involvement than those with low involvement (the opposite of the hypothesis). This finding suggests that those with high involvement made stronger judgments based on attractiveness than those with low involvement. Additionally, Table 26 illustrates that those respondents with a higher level of cognitive involvement had higher overall ratings of endorser credibility (see Table 27 for the means).

An interesting finding in this series of univariate ANOVA models is that for the models where endorser trustworthiness and expertise were the dependent variable, company type became a significant main effect variable when the endorsers (both attractive and unattractive) paired with the cosmetic company got higher ratings of endorser trustworthiness and expertise than that of the endorsers with the pharmaceutical company.

Additionally, it is important to note that different patterns occur with the dependent variables as endorser trustworthiness and expertise. One important difference to note is that with endorser expertise as the dependent variable, the interaction between company type and personal involvement is significant.

**Table 26**

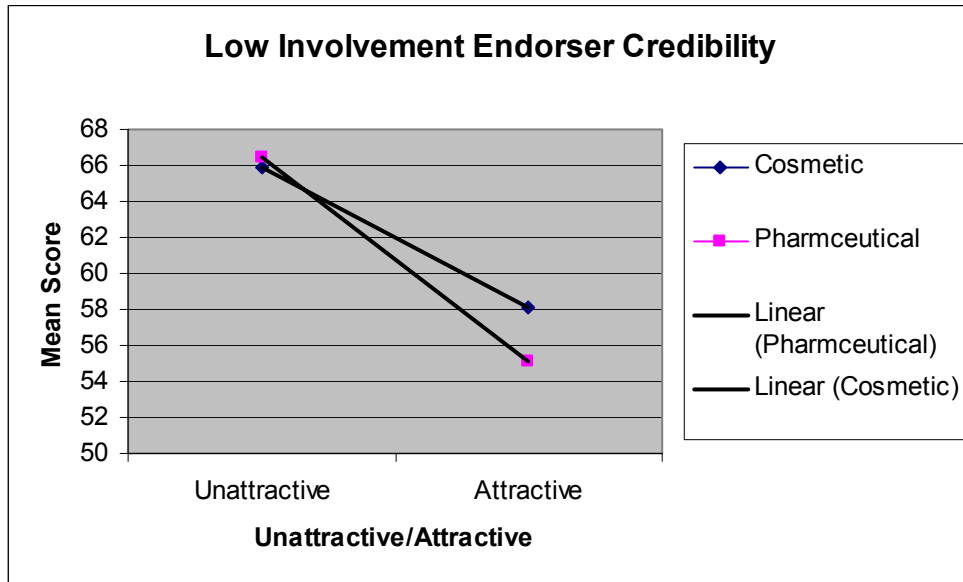
*Univariate Analysis table for Dependent Variable Endorser Credibility*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	10618.282	9	1179.809	5.550	.000
Intercept	66549.849	1	66549.849	313.042	.000
Class	779.704	1	779.704	3.668	.057
Gender	275.049	1	275.049	1.294	.256
Personal Involvement	1534.948	1	1534.948	7.220	.008
Attractiveness	7109.398	1	7109.398	33.442	.000
Company Type	293.964	1	293.964	1.383	.241
Personal Involvement * Attractiveness	59.088	1	59.088	.278	.598
Personal Involvement * Company Type	55.897	1	55.897	.263	.609
Attractiveness * Company Type	346.596	1	346.596	1.630	.203
Personal Involvement * Attractiveness * Company Type	18.270	1	18.270	.086	.770
<b>Error</b>	<b>55698.873</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>212.591</b>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>1175091.563</b>	<b>272</b>			
<b>Corrected Total</b>	<b>66317.154</b>	<b>271</b>			

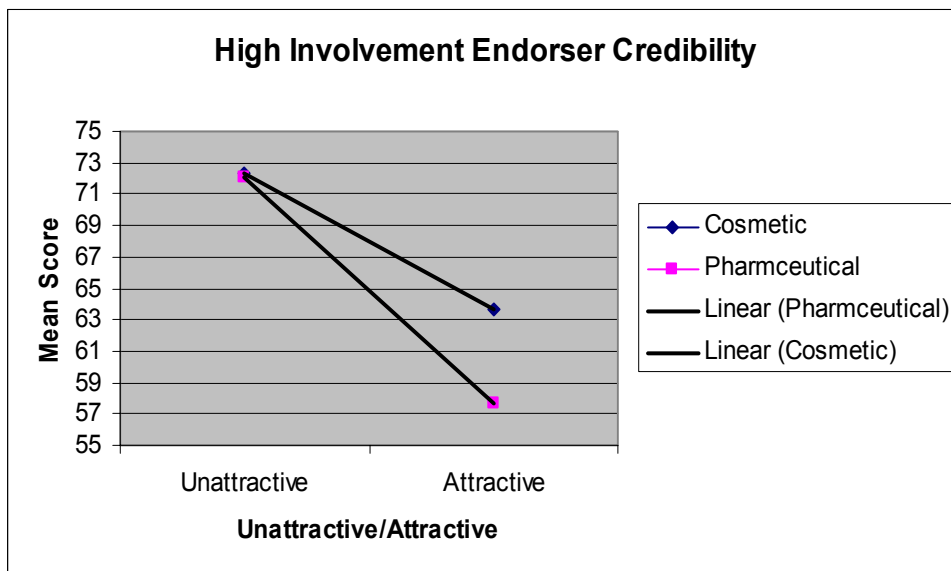
R Squared = .160 (Adjusted R Squared = .131)

**Table 27*****Means for Dependent Variable: Endorser Credibility***

			Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
Personal Involvement	Endorser	Company			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low	Unattractive	Cosmetic	65.889	2.376	61.210	70.568
		Pharmaceutical	66.493	2.406	61.756	71.231
	Attractive	Cosmetic	58.142	2.406	53.404	62.880
		Pharmaceutical	55.125	2.376	50.446	59.804
High	Unattractive	Cosmetic	72.270	3.143	66.082	78.459
		Pharmaceutical	72.103	2.372	67.433	76.774
	Attractive	Cosmetic	63.699	2.372	59.029	68.370
		Pharmaceutical	57.725	3.143	51.536	63.914



**Figure 7 – Outcome Graph: Low Involvement - Endorser Credibility**



**Figure 8 – Outcome Graph: High Involvement – Endorser Credibility**



Tables 28 and 29 present the findings of a univariate ANOVA model with attractiveness, company type, and personal involvement as the fixed factors in which endorser trustworthiness is the dependent variable. Figures 9 and 10 present the outcome of the ANOVA in graph form.

**Table 28**

*Univariate Analysis table for Dependent Variable Endorser Trustworthiness*

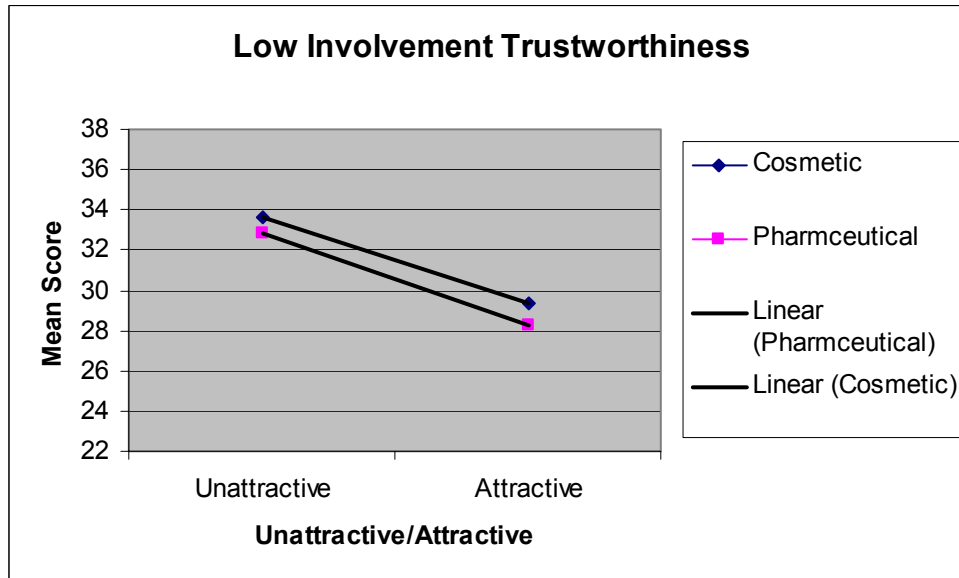
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2033.092	9	225.899	3.807	.000
Intercept	41646.121	1	41646.121	701.767	.000
Gender	.750	1	.750	.013	.911
Class	277.101	1	277.101	4.669	.032
Attractiveness	356.326	1	356.326	6.004	.015
Company	1131.694	1	1131.694	19.070	.000
Personal Involvement	71.795	1	71.795	1.210	.272
Attractiveness * Company Type	4.308	1	4.308	.073	.788
Attractiveness * Personal Involvement	1.311	1	1.311	.022	.882
Company Type * Personal Involvement	5.116	1	5.116	.086	.769
Attractiveness * Company Type * Personal Involvement	2.006	1	2.006	.034	.854
<b>Error</b>	<b>15548.307</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>59.345</b>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>298627.063</b>	<b>272</b>			
<b>Corrected Total</b>	<b>17581.399</b>	<b>271</b>			

R Squared = .116 (Adjusted R Squared = .085)

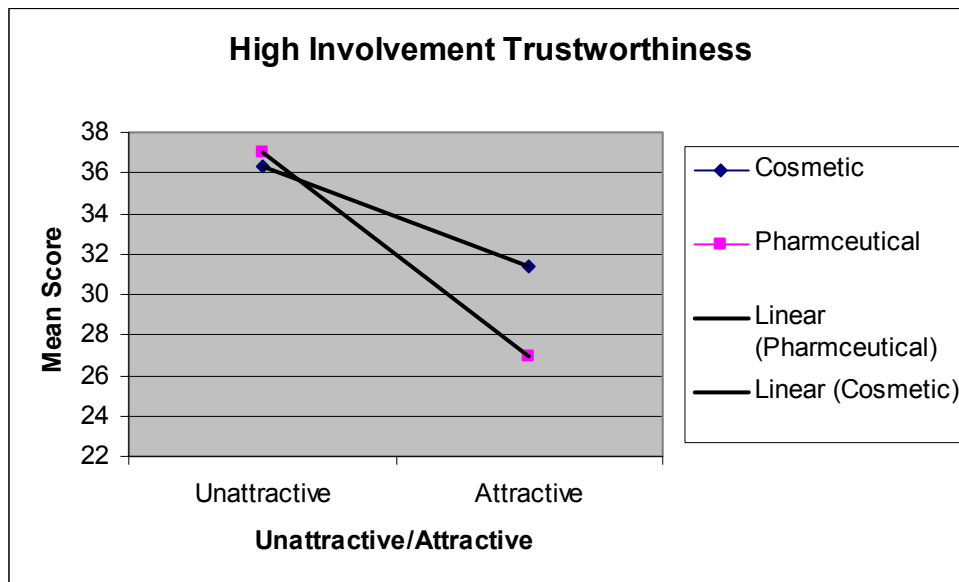
**Table 29*****Means for Dependent Variable: Endorser Trustworthiness***

			Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
Personal Involvement	Endorser	Company			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low	Unattractive	Cosmetic	33.658	1.256	31.186	36.130
		Pharmaceutical	32.848	1.273	30.343	35.354
	Attractive	Cosmetic	29.308	1.273	26.802	31.813
		Pharmaceutical	28.289	1.256	25.817	30.762
High	Unattractive	Cosmetic	35.790	1.657	32.528	39.052
		Pharmaceutical	35.057	1.255	32.586	37.528
	Attractive	Cosmetic	32.320	1.255	29.849	34.791
		Pharmaceutical	30.654	1.657	27.392	33.916

Evaluated at covariates appeared in the model: SEX = .8088, DUMCLASS = .5074.



**Figure 9 – Outcome Graph: Low Involvement Endorser Trustworthiness**



**Figure 10 – Outcome Graph: High Involvement Endorser Trustworthiness**

Tables 30 and 31 present the findings of a univariate ANOVA model with attractiveness, company type, and personal involvement as the fixed factors in which endorser expertise is the dependent variable. Figures 11 and 12 present the results of the ANOVA in graph form.

**Table 30**

*Univariate Analysis table for Dependent Variable Endorser Expertise*

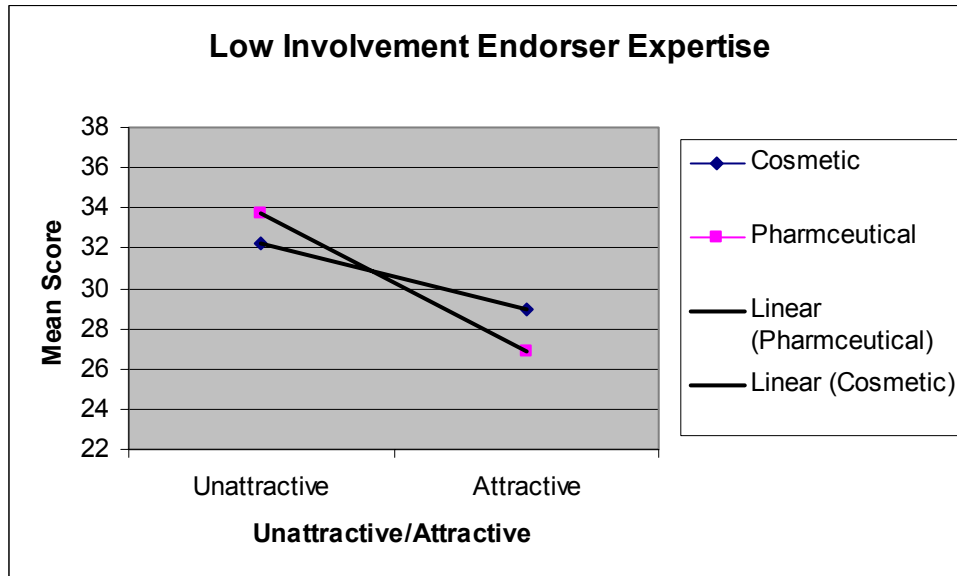
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	3694.893	9	410.544	6.267	.000
Intercept	44123.471	1	44123.471	673.602	.000
Gender	245.270	1	245.270	3.744	.054
Class	118.293	1	118.293	1.806	.180
Attractiveness	368.974	1	368.974	5.633	.018
Company	2568.116	1	2568.116	39.206	.000
Personal Involvement	75.207	1	75.207	1.148	.285
Attractiveness * Company Type	95.304	1	95.304	1.455	.229
Attractiveness * Personal Involvement	40.085	1	40.085	.612	.435
Company Type * Personal Involvement	290.103	1	290.103	4.429	.036
Attractiveness * Company Type * Personal Involvement	8.769	1	8.769	.134	.715
<b>Error</b>	<b>17161.986</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>65.504</b>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>294225.000</b>	<b>272</b>			
<b>Corrected Total</b>	<b>20856.879</b>	<b>271</b>			

R Squared = .177 (Adjusted R Squared = .149)

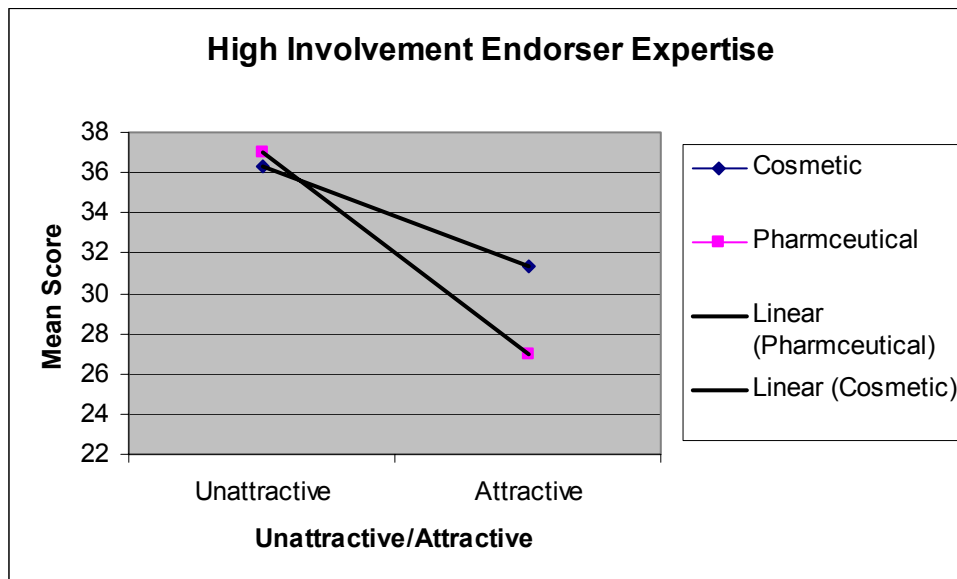
**Table 31*****Means for Dependent Variable: Endorser Expertise***

			Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
Personal Involvement	Endorser	Company			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low	Unattractive	Cosmetic	32.254	1.319	29.656	34.851
		Pharmaceutical	33.733	1.337	31.100	36.365
	Attractive	Cosmetic	28.922	1.337	26.290	31.554
		Pharmaceutical	26.859	1.319	24.262	29.456
High	Unattractive	Cosmetic	36.355	1.741	32.927	39.782
		Pharmaceutical	37.011	1.318	34.415	39.608
	Attractive	Cosmetic	31.345	1.318	28.749	33.941
		Pharmaceutical	26.945	1.741	23.518	30.373

Evaluated at covariates appeared in the model: SEX = .8088, DUMCLASS = .5074.



**Figure 11 – Outcome Graph: Low Involvement – Endorser Expertise**



**Figure 12 – Outcome Graph: High Involvement – Endorser Expertise**

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **Limitations**

There are several limitations of this study. First, the sample is a relatively young and female one, where 80% of the sample was female. This has a number of implications. For one, a young audience may be more trusting of a cosmetics company than a pharmaceutical company due to their age, i.e. college students, especially females, will have more experience and knowledge of cosmetics companies than pharmaceutical companies. This could possibly account for why, overall, the cosmetics company received higher ratings of organizational credibility. Additionally, the sample is heavily female, which skews results to a more female point of view. Females might more readily trust cosmetics companies, are more likely concerned with or personally involved with breast cancer research, and may make judgments about a woman's physical appearance differently than males. Thus, this may affect the external validity of the study. Future studies could fix this problem by obtaining a more representative sample.

Second, this study only examines pharmaceutical and cosmetics companies. There are many different types of companies that engage in public relations, reputation management and social responsibility activities. Additionally, the companies used in the study are fictitious companies; it may be unrealistic or artificial to have **no** feelings toward a company. However, for the sake of this study, it was beneficial that subjects not have preconceived notions of the companies in the study since the study was more concerned with the relationship of endorser to the organization (based on endorser attractiveness and company type not an existing attitude toward company reputation). Again, this may affect the external validity of the study in that only two types of companies were examined and the results may not be generalizable to other industries.

Another limitation of the study is that only one issue (breast cancer research) was used as a stimulus for the CSR message. This affects the external validity of the study. People may have different attitudes and expectations depending on the type of social activity the company is involved in. Additionally, this issue tends to be more female-oriented. Consequently, these results may only be generalizable to companies involved in breast-cancer or female-oriented medical research. Future studies would need to test other types of social responsibility activities to determine whether the same results hold true to different types of CSR initiatives/activities.

Another issue to consider in this thesis that may affect the generalizability of its results is the fact that the endorser was a person (Human Resources Manager) from within the company. People may have pre-existing attitudes about the credibility of an internal endorser, i.e. they may be more likely to view that person as less credible because he or she works for the company. Furthermore, an HR manager was chosen rather than a CEO to represent the endorser. This person may not have as much status or credibility in endorsement as a CEO. It is also fairly unlikely that an organization would use an HR manager for endorsement. Future studies could test attitudes toward using a person other than a CEO (internal) as an endorser. For example, future studies could test an external 'expert', such as a physician (in the case of medical research as a CSR activity). Testing an external endorser would be beneficial for two reasons. First, there is more of a choice in choosing a more or less attractive endorser in the real world (in the case of an internal endorser, the person looks how they look, e.g. the CEO has a certain look and cannot be substituted with another person). Second, the results could be compared to the results of this study to see if overall external endorsers get different ratings of credibility (with attractiveness being the same level).

The visuals themselves present some issues related to the internal validity of this study. The clothing style and possible perceptions of differences in age could be



confounding variables in this study. For example, both of the attractive endorsers have a more casual clothing style than the unattractive endorsers, which may lead to lower perceptions of trust or expertise for the attractive endorsers. Additionally, those who were perceived as older may have received higher ratings of expertise or trustworthiness. To address this issue, future studies could eliminate any shot below the neckline or could ensure that the clothing styles were similar. As for age, participants could give an estimate age range for each person in the pretest to help control for that possible artifact.

The measurement of cognitive involvement is another limitation of the study. A single measure of cognitive involvement was employed rather than a scale, so there are concerns for reliability of the measure. Participants could have misinterpreted the question. Future studies should include the entire set of personal involvement measures to get a more comprehensive and reliable measure. Additionally, this study attempted to measure how much a person thought about breast cancer due to how personally close to the issue the respondent is – an assumption was made that people who have close experiences with breast cancer would 1) think more about the issue and therefore rely less on attractiveness to make a judgment and 2) that this set of respondents would consequently evaluate a corporate social responsibility ad differently due to that closeness level. Consequently, the involvement variable may not have measured cognitive involvement in the classic theoretical sense. For example, in ELM advertising studies, cognitive involvement is a manipulated variable, such as offering a prize, (Petty et. al 1983) rather than a control variable as in this thesis. Theories such as ELM and Social Adaptation were a good theoretical base to consider inasmuch that this study took into account and recognized the need to account for the fact that some people would take a more central or peripheral processing route when evaluating the CSR ads due to their involvement with the issue,

but the study did not use a measure that was similar enough to classic Involvement studies to make the predictions in H3.<sup>11</sup> The study did measure what it intended to measure (personal closeness), but was incorrect in the assumption that this form of involvement would act similarly to applied cognitive involvement advertising research studies. Rather, the results indicate that those who are more personally involved in an issue will more critically evaluate those with an attractive appearance in the case of a corporate social responsibility issue.

Although there are several limitations of this study, the results provide insight that has both theoretical and practical implications.

### **Discussion and Implications**

The findings in this study present several interesting findings with both practical and theoretical implications. First, in a practical sense, there is a positive relationship between endorser credibility and company credibility. Thus, the results of this study support H1. This is an important discovery as research has typically revolved around endorser credibility and organizational credibility separately, not the relationship between the two (as discussed on page 1). These results also indicate that a ‘halo effect’ occurs where people make judgments about a person’s credibility (endorser) and that those judgments carry over onto judgments of the sponsoring organization. The challenge lies in determining what factors create the highest amount of endorser credibility.

Second, attractiveness may not behave as expected in endorser credibility in all endorsement situations. Hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1c were not supported by this

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<sup>11</sup> H3: In a high involvement condition, people will rely less on the physical appearance of endorser when making judgments about organizational credibility than in a low involvement condition. Thus, higher levels of personal involvement will result in a smaller difference in means of endorser credibility between attractive and unattractive endorsers.

study. These hypotheses predicted that attractiveness would be positively correlated with perceptions of overall credibility, including the measures of endorser trustworthiness and expertise. These results could have been a function of the clothing styles or perceived age of the endorsers, as mentioned in the limitations section, but this thesis posits that attractiveness of endorser has different effects depending on the type of message. This calls into question whether the Ohanian (1990) scale is appropriate to use in every endorser study.

Ohanian's (1990) endorser credibility scale includes attractiveness as one of the underlying constructs of the scale. Ohanian (1990) justifies including attractiveness as a construct based on Joseph's (1982) review of attractiveness in advertising and related disciplines that suggests that attractive communicators are consistently liked more and have a positive impact on products. Using attractiveness as a construct for endorser credibility in this study was inappropriate for two reasons: 1) because attractiveness was manipulated as part of the independent conditions and 2) this is a study focused on the selling of an idea (social responsibility of a company) not a consumer product.

The results of this study indicate that in a public relations/ social responsibility campaign (versus product advertising and marketing), the physical attractiveness of endorser behaves differently. In fact, the data supported an opposite finding of what would typically be expected of attractiveness, that is, that it leads to lower levels of perceived expertise and trustworthiness rather than higher. One possible explanation is that perceptions of an endorser in public relations (or the selling of ideas) may be based on different standards than those in marketing and advertising. Specifically, constructs such as trustworthiness and expertise may be more relevant to PR than marketing a consumer product. Studies such as that of Maddux and Rogers (1980), in which selling a product was not the goal of the persuasive message, indicate that

attractiveness is not an important factor in obtaining positive opinion change or behavior intention as other factors (such as levels of expertise or supporting arguments), and the findings of this thesis support this research. Taking attractiveness out of the scale and examining the ratings of endorser trustworthiness and expertise suggests that attractiveness of endorser had a negative relationship with these factors. Thus, attractive endorsers might not always be the best bet in public relations endorsements.

Additionally, from a theoretical standpoint the ‘what is beautiful is good’ (Dion et al., 1972) conception may need to be revisited. It is not suggested that physically attractive people do not often receive positive attributions based on their appearance, but that attractiveness does not lead to positive attributions in **every** situation. The findings support, however, that people do use attractiveness as a heuristic in making judgments and attributions about people – attractiveness of the endorser lead to significantly lower ratings of expertise and trustworthiness.

Third, there is an interaction between attractiveness and company type for attractive endorsers related to perceived expertise of the source. Though H2 was not entirely supported, there is support for the fact that, under the conditions of this study, the company type and attractiveness interaction does exist for perceptions of expertise. Although unattractive endorsers were rated higher for trustworthiness and expertise overall, for expertise, attractive endorsers received significantly higher ratings of expertise for the cosmetics company versus the pharmaceutical company. These findings suggest a less attractive person may be the best bet for an endorser of a CSR message for both a pharmaceutical company and a cosmetics company. However, if a more beautiful endorser is used, she will be perceived as more of an expert for a cosmetics company than the pharmaceutical. This makes intuitive sense and is also in agreement with the ‘match-up’ hypothesis, which posits that in advertising and

marketing, a person's attractiveness will lead to greater perceptions of credibility when the product being marketed is related to beauty.

With regard to personal involvement, the findings of this study did support not H3, that is, the findings did not indicate that high involvement levels lead people to rely on attractiveness less. In fact, those people with high involvement gave overall higher endorser credibility scores (perhaps due to their personal connection with breast cancer) and tended to view attractiveness as taking away from expertise and trustworthiness. In essence, those with high involvement made greater judgments rather than less, which contradicts theories of involvement such as ELM, which would predict that those with greater involvement would rely less on heuristics such as attractiveness to make a judgment. As stated in the limitation section, my conceptualization and measurement of involvement differed from ELM advertising study conceptualizations and that may account for the difference.

The point of a corporate social responsibility message is to create a trusting relationship of an organization with its publics and to convince the public that the organization is interested in contributing to the well being of society. This is a very different goal than simply selling a product. In this case, merely a pretty face may not lead to attributions of trustworthiness and expertise found in marketing and advertising research.

For industry, this study has several important findings and raises a number of considerations for public relations and/or marketing decision-makers when launching a corporate social responsibility or social marketing campaign. First, when choosing an endorser, the decision-maker should consider whether or not an external vs. internal endorser would be more credible. This could vary depending on who the audience of the campaign is – consumers, stockholders, employees, etc. Another important factor is whether or not the person (if a known individual) has an already-established positive

or negative reputation. Second, decision-makers should not rely on the ‘what is beautiful is good’ conception. This thesis indicates that in a message with social connotations, people are not merely looking for a pretty face. In fact, this thesis suggests that those who are personally involved in a serious issue such as breast cancer will view a pretty face negatively (and this assumes that the person viewing the ad will not have any preexisting attitudes toward the person involved).

Additionally, this thesis supports the idea that decision-makers should consider the type of company they are when choosing an endorser. In this thesis, the attractive endorser received significantly higher ratings for the cosmetics company (beauty-related) than the pharmaceutical company (though it is important to note that the unattractive endorser got higher ratings for both company types).

What this thesis should clearly communicate to PR and marketing professionals making CSR decisions is that marketing research is a necessary component to their choosing of endorsers. These professionals need to consider (and discover!) what is important to their targeted audience, whether an internal or external endorser is more credible and should not follow on the heels of advertising where a pretty face will automatically equal greater credibility. Choosing a credible endorser is certainly important as the connection between endorser and organizational credibility is supported by this study (as well as intuition).

## **APPENDIX A**

### **SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

**Who I am:** I'm a Master's student in Communication at Cornell University, conducting research for my thesis related to corporations and ethics/ philanthropy.

**What I'm asking of you:** I would like answer the following questionnaire related to corporations and philanthropy, which should take about 15 minutes to answer.

**What are your rights:** Your participation is completely voluntary, and your responses will never be linked to your name. In fact, I don't want you to put your name anywhere on this questionnaire. By answering these questions, we'll take it that you agreed to participate.

**Instructions:** Please answer the following questionnaire to the best of your ability, and remember: there are no right answers! Instructions will appear in **bold typeface**.

## **Azure Cosmetics** – *Commitment to Social Responsibility*

“Azure Cosmetics, Inc. is committed to being the company for women, and in support of this mission, the Azure Foundation is responding to the needs of women and their families by funding the fight against the most commonly diagnosed cancer among women: breast cancer. This is accomplished through a unique initiative called the **Azure Breast Cancer Crusade**, which has a 10-year goal of \$250,000,000 net in total funds raised worldwide to fund access to care and finding a cure for breast cancer. In addition to the US, Azure now supports programs for breast cancer and other vital women's health issues in 50 countries around the world.

The goal of the Azure Breast Cancer Crusade is to benefit all women through research, clinical care, support services, education and early detection, but there is special emphasis on reaching medically underserved women, including low-income, elderly and minority women, and women without adequate health insurance. Reversing historical disparities in breast cancer care is a priority of the Azure Breast Cancer Crusade.”



-- Maggie Smith, Human Resources Manager, Azure Cosmetics



**Please answer whether you agree or disagree with the following statements (1 completely disagree, 10 agree completely) related to Azure Cosmetics:**

**Azure Cosmetics**

1. This organization would treat people like me fairly.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

2. If this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

3. This organization can be relied upon to keep its promises.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

4. I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

5. I feel very confident about this organization's skills.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

6. This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

7. Sound principles seem to guide this organization's behavior.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

8. This organization would not mislead people like me.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

9. I am very willing to let this organization make decisions for people like me.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

## ***Pharmco Pharmaceuticals – Social Responsibility Statement***

“The Pharmco Foundation has committed \$3 million over three years, beginning in 2003, to support a highly targeted domestic Breast Cancer grant making initiative called the ***Pharmco Breast Cancer Research Initiative***.

The initiative will support culturally appropriate prevention programs such as breast exam techniques, targeting multi-cultural communities in the United States as well as other countries, in addition to providing funding to breast cancer research entities.

The initiative is designed to help lower the following breast cancer statistics:

- Every 3 minutes a woman in the United States is diagnosed with breast cancer. In 2003, approximately 212,600 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed. Nearly 40,000 women will die from this disease.
- Breast cancer is the leading cancer among white and African American women.
- Breast cancer incidence in women has increased from one in 20 in 1960 to one in eight today.



-- Sandra Jones, Human Resources Manager, Pharmco Pharmaceuticals.

**Please answer whether you agree or disagree with the following statements (1 completely disagree, 10 agree completely) related to Pharmco Pharmaceuticals:**

**Pharmco Pharmaceuticals**

1 This organization would treat people like me fairly.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

2 If this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

3 This organization can be relied upon to keep its promises.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

4 I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

5 I feel very confident about this organization's skills.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

6 This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

7 Sound principles seem to guide this organization's behavior.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

8 This organization would not mislead people like me.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

9 I am very willing to let this organization make decisions for people like me.

(completely disagree) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (completely agree)

**Azure Cosmetics – Commitment to Social Responsibility**

“Azure Cosmetics, Inc. is committed to being the company for women, and in support of this mission, the Azure Foundation is responding to the needs of women and their families by funding the fight against the most commonly diagnosed cancer among women: breast cancer. This is accomplished through a unique initiative called the **Azure Breast Cancer Crusade**, which has a 10-year goal of \$250,000,000 net in total funds raised worldwide to fund access to care and finding a cure for breast cancer. In addition to the US, Azure now supports programs for breast cancer and other vital women's health issues in 50 countries around the world.

The goal of the Azure Breast Cancer Crusade is to benefit all women through research, clinical care, support services, education and early detection, but there is special emphasis on reaching medically underserved women, including low-income, elderly and minority women, and women without adequate health insurance. Reversing historical disparities in breast cancer care is a priority of the Azure Breast Cancer Crusade.”



-- Maggie Smith, Human Resources Manager, Azure Cosmetics

**Please answer the following the following questions related to the endorser for the above company, on a scale of 1 to 10. (1 being this person does not represent that adjective and 10 the person absolutely represents the adjective).**

Unattractive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Attractive
Not Classy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Classy
Ugly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Beautiful
Plain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Elegant
Not Sexy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Sexy
Untrustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Trustworthy
Undependable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Dependable
Dishonest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Honest
Unreliable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Reliable
Insincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Sincere
Not expert	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Expert
Not experienced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Experienced
Unknowledgeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Knowledgeable
Unqualified	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Qualified
Unskilled	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Skilled

**Pharmco Pharmaceuticals – Social Responsibility Statement**

“The Pharmco Foundation has committed \$3 million over three years, beginning in 2003, to support a highly targeted domestic Breast Cancer grant making initiative called the **Pharmco Breast Cancer Research Initiative**.

The initiative will support culturally appropriate prevention programs such as breast exam techniques, targeting multi-cultural communities in the United States as well as other countries, in addition to providing funding to breast cancer research entities.

The initiative is designed to help lower the following breast cancer statistics:

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- Breast cancer is the leading cancer among white and African American women.
- Breast cancer incidence in women has increased from one in 20 in 1960 to one in eight today.



-- Sandra Jones, Human Resources Manager, Pharmco Pharmaceuticals.

**Please answer the following the following questions related to the endorser for the above company, on a scale of 1 to 10. (1 being this person does not represent that adjective and 10 the person absolutely represents the adjective).**

Unattractive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Attractive
Not Classy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Classy
Ugly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Beautiful
Plain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Elegant
Not Sexy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Sexy
Untrustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Trustworthy
Undependable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Dependable
Dishonest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Honest
Unreliable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Reliable
Insincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Sincere
Not expert	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Expert
Not experienced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Experienced
Unknowledgeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Knowledgeable
Unqualified	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Qualified
Unskilled	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Skilled

**Please answer the following questions (circle the appropriate answer).**

1. What is your gender? F M

2. Do you know someone who has had and survived breast cancer?

Y N

3. Do you know someone who has had breast cancer and died?

Y N (if no, please skip to question 5)

4. Was this person (s) in your family or a close friend? Y N

5. Have you ever participated in a fundraiser for breast cancer, e.g. a run/walk? Y N

6. Have you ever donated money to breast cancer research? Y N

7. How important personally is breast cancer research to you, on a scale of 1 to 10?

(not at all important) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (extremely important)

8. In general, how important do you think breast cancer research is, on a scale of 1 to 10?

(not at all important) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (extremely important)

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